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Food

# Programs

of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
Program Aid No. 1161

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates a number of programs to provide food assistance to people who need such help. The agency of the Department which administers those programs is the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Creation of this agency has permitted greater specialization in and concentration on the effective administration of the food programs.

National headquarters of the Food and Nutrition Service is in Washington, D.C., but the programs of the agency are operated through a series of seven Regional Offices. The map on page 10 shows the area each Regional Office covers, and the listing on page 11 gives each office address.

The Regional Offices, in turn, operate the family and child feeding programs through the appropriate State agencies in their regions—the agricultural, educational, welfare, or health agency of the State government. In a few cases, State law prohibits States from disbursing funds to nonpublic schools; in such cases, FNS Regional Offices operate the child nutrition programs directly in private schools.

These Federal-State-local food programs are available to all eligible Americans without regard to their race, color, creed, or national origin.

A brief description of the food assistance programs for which FNS is the delivery system follows. Page 9 lists a series of publications which describe the programs individually in greater detail.

# Food Stamp Program

FNS cooperates with State and local welfare agencies to administer the Food Stamp Program, which enables low-income households to buy more food of greater variety to improve their diets. FNS develops the policies and procedures for administering the Food Stamp Program and pays half the State administrative costs.

Participants in the Food Stamp Program pay a sum of money based on their family size and net income. In return, they receive food stamps worth more than the dollar amount they paid. They can then exchange the food stamps for food at authorized retail food stores.

The program began as a pilot operation in eight counties during 1961. After 3 years, the Food Stamp Act of 1964 made the program permanent and available to any county wishing to participate. It expanded rapidly in 1971 when legislation set uniform standards for participating counties—standards which gave more people eligibility for food stamps. And, in 1973, the Food Stamp Program was mandated to operate in every county in the Nation.

All those who are on welfare are eligible for the Food Stamp Program. But you don't have to be on welfare to receive food stamps if you meet the eligibility requirements. More than half the current participants are not on welfare.

# Food Distribution Program

Through the Food Distribution Program, FNS donates foods to various food program outlets—including schools, charitable institutions, nutrition programs for the elderly, summer camps, disaster relief agencies, and needy family programs on some Indian reservations.

Commodities used in the program are generally acquired under price support and surplus-removal legislation, and donated to program outlets through cooperating State agencies. The volume and variety of donated foods purchased under this legislation may fluctuate in relation to agricultural marketing conditions. However, the Department does have special purchasing authority to acquire foods for certain feeding programs which by law must receive a minimum annual level of food assistance.

# Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides specified nutritious food supplements to pregnant and nursing women as well as to children up to their fifth birthday. All mothers and children who participate in the program are individually certified as “nutritional risks” because of inadequate nutrition and income.

The supplemental foods provided to program participants contain nutrients—specifically high quality protein, iron, calcium, vitamin A and vitamin C—known to be lacking in the diets of persons considered nutritional risks.

The WIC Program provides money to participating State health departments or comparable State agencies. Indian tribes recognized by the Department of Interior or by the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare may also act as State agencies. These agencies use Federal funds to provide foods for WIC recipients through local health agencies and to pay for specified administrative and clinical costs, including those for nutrition education services.

The first pilot WIC Program began operating in January 1974 and the WIC Program has now been extended through fiscal year 1978.



# Child Nutrition Programs

Six separate child feeding programs are administered by FNS—the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, Child Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program for Children, and Nonfood Assistance Program. Although they are separate programs, they share a common goal: to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children.

These programs are authorized by the National School Lunch Act of 1946 and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The programs are designed to help all children, but focus particularly on children from low-income families.

In most instances, State educational agencies administer the programs. The Federal Government offers cash and food assistance to the States for those schools and child care institutions which meet the requirements of the individual programs.

## **National School Lunch Program**

Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program has provided nutritious lunches every day to the Nation's school children. All public and nonprofit private schools of high school grade and under—as well as public and licensed nonprofit private residential child care institutions—may participate in the program. In order to be eligible to receive Federal aid, schools and institutions must:

- Operate the lunch program on a nonprofit basis for all children;

- Serve nutritious lunches according to the requirements established by USDA;

- Provide lunches free and at a reduced price to children who are unable to pay the full price of the lunch, based on USDA income poverty guidelines;

- Insure that children receiving meals free or at a reduced price are not overtly identified.

FNS reimburses schools and institutions based on the number of lunches served and whether they are paid, free, or reduced price. In addition to cash assistance, schools receive technical assistance and USDA-donated foods.

## **School Breakfast Program**

The School Breakfast Program began with the



passage of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The program started as a pilot project aimed only at schools with large numbers of needy children or students who traveled long distances to school. Today, the program is available to all public and nonprofit private schools of high school grade and under, and to public and licensed nonprofit private residential child care institutions. It is especially important in improving the diets of needy children who may receive breakfast free or at a reduced price under the same guidelines used in the National School Lunch Program.

### **Child Care Food Program**

The Child Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program for Children provide nutritional benefits similar to those of the school food programs.

The Child Care Food Program operates year-round in nonresidential institutions such as day care centers, Head Start centers, and family day care homes. Attending children receive nutritious breakfasts, lunches, suppers, and snacks. FNS assistance in the form of cash reimbursement and commodity donations is tied to the volume of meals and the relative need of children served. Funds for purchasing equipment are available to institutions lacking adequate food service facilities.

### **Summer Food Service Program for Children**

The Summer Food Service Program for Children spans the gap in the school food programs by providing meals to children during extended vacation periods. It operates during the summer, or during any school vacation of more than 3 weeks for schools with a continuous school year calendar.

Any public, or nonprofit private, nonresidential institution or residential summer camp may sponsor the program in areas where at least one-third of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. All meals are served without charge to attending children. FNS reimburses for the full operating costs of the food service, up to specified maximum rates for meals.

### **Special Milk Program**

The Special Milk Program makes it possible for all children attending a school or institution to purchase milk at a reduced price—or, if they are needy, to receive it free. Schools and institutions which participate in other Federal-State child nutrition programs may also participate in the Special Milk Program. However, the milk program is especially helpful to those schools which have no other meal service.

### **Nonfood Assistance Program**

In many low-income areas, local resources cannot provide the food service equipment needed to establish, maintain, and expand school food services. The Nonfood Assistance Program provides funds for eligible schools and residential child care institutions to help them acquire adequate food service equipment. These funds are used primarily to reimburse schools and residential child care institutions which serve needy children and which have either no equipment or grossly inadequate equipment. In order to receive nonfood assistance, eligible schools and residential child care institutions must participate in either the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program.

The Nonfood Assistance Program reimburses eligible schools and residential child care institutions for up to 75 percent of the total equipment cost. However, especially needy schools and residential child care institutions may receive 100 percent funding.

# **Publications Describing Food and Nutrition Service Programs**

## **Food Stamp Program**

FNS-1 Food Stamp Handbook for Volunteers  
PA-1123 Food Stamp Program

## **Child Nutrition Programs**

FNS-10 Child Nutrition Programs: A Handbook for Volunteers

## **National School Lunch Program**

FNS-78 National School Lunch Program

## **School Breakfast Program**

FNS-84 School Breakfast Program

FNS-151 Energize Your Day with Breakfast—for Parents and Community Groups

FNS-152 Energize Your Day with Breakfast—for School Administrators

## **Child Care Food Program**

FNS-154 Child Care Food Program

## **Summer Food Service Program for Children**

FNS-155 Summer Food Service Program for Children

## **Special Milk Program**

FNS-82 Special Milk Program

## **Nonfood Assistance Program**

FNS-157 Nonfood Assistance Program

## **Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children**

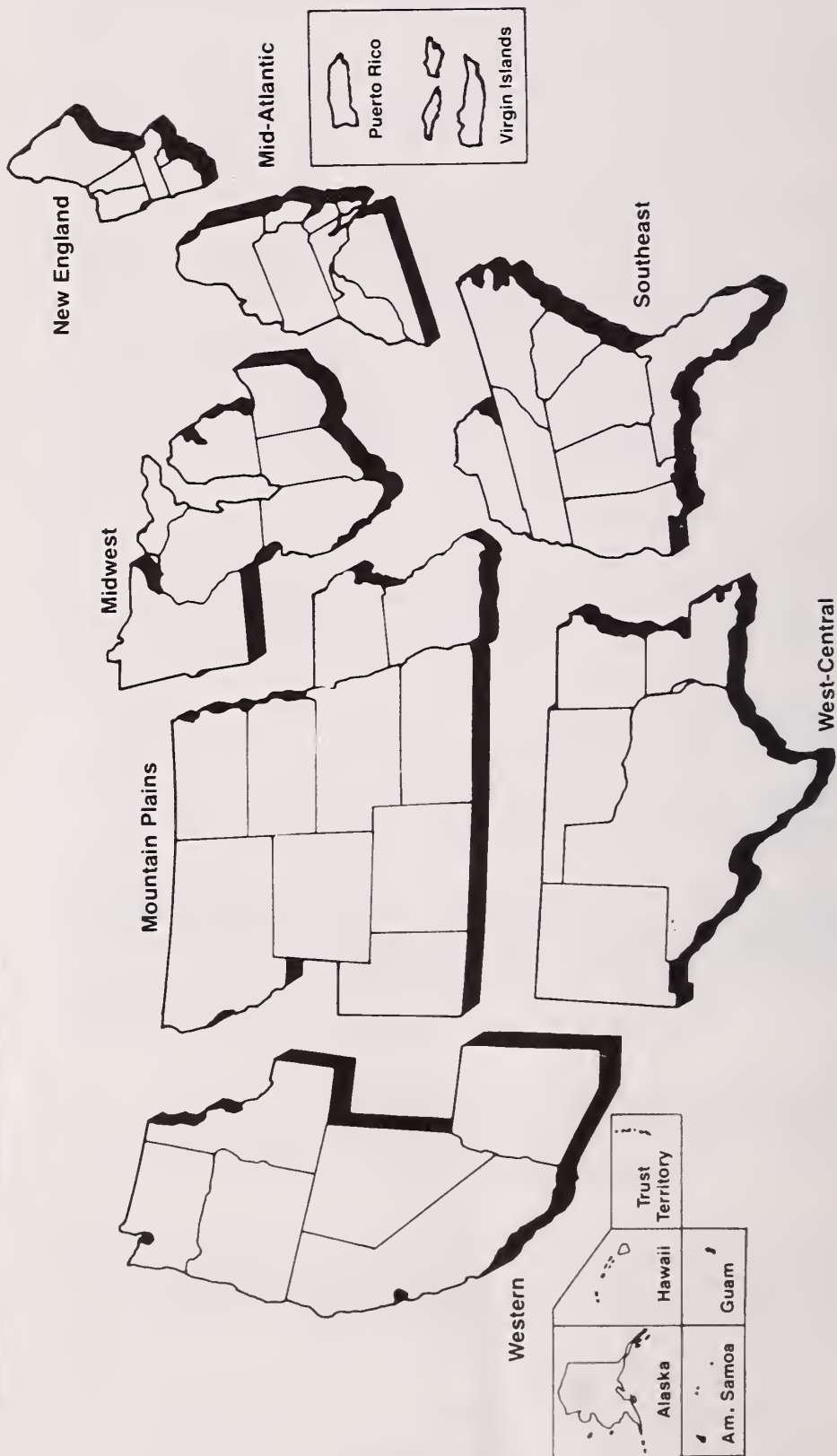
FNS-131 Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children

## **Food Distribution Program**

PA-667 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Donation Program

These publications or a copy of the complete listing of FNS publications are available from the FNS Regional Office for your State or the

Information Division  
Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250





# **Food and Nutrition Service Regional Offices**

## **New England Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
32 Third Avenue  
Burlington, Mass. 01803  
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,  
Rhode Island, Vermont

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## **Mid-Atlantic Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
One Vahlsing Center  
Robbinsville, N.J. 08691  
Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania,  
Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

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## **Southeast Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1100 Spring Street, N.W.  
Atlanta, Ga. 30309  
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina,  
South Carolina, Tennessee

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## **Midwest Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
536 South Clark Street  
Chicago, Ill. 60605  
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

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## **Mountain Plains Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1823 Stout Street  
Denver, Colo. 80202  
Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North  
Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

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## **Southwest Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1100 Commerce Street  
Dallas, Tex. 75202  
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

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## **Western Regional Office**

Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
550 Kearny Street  
San Francisco, Calif. 94108  
Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii,  
Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Trust Territories, Washington

